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New York

President:	Mr. Syed Hamid Albar	(Malaysia)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Moura
	Canada	Mr. Duval
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of July, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of June 1999. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Jagne for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Bangladesh, Croatia, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Mozambique, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and South Africa, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Smith (Australia), Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr. Simonović (Croatia), Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador), Ms. Korpi (Finland), Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia), Mr. Yamazaki (Japan), Mr. Santos (Mozambique), Mr. Hughes (New Zealand), Mr. Lee (Republic of Korea) and Mr. Vermeulen (South Africa) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Today, the Security Council will hold an open debate on the question pertaining to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment, in the context of the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building.

I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I am pleased to be here today to share some thoughts on the role that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration play in United Nations peacekeeping.

The conflicts with which the Security Council is grappling today have given these tasks particular urgency. Those conflicts are more often than not internal civil wars, with some degree of cross-border or international implications. They tend to take place in poorer countries, with vast movements of internally displaced persons as well as refugees.

Easily available light arms, including landmines, are the weapons of choice. And often, one finds among the combatants young children conscripted as soldiers. These are, in short, highly complex and volatile situations. For us, as outsiders, the task of helping the afflicted countries find the path of peace and development presents an enormous challenge.

Within that challenge, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are distinct tasks, but ones which often overlap, and which must in any case be approached as part of an integrated peace-building process.

These are also highly sensitive tasks. They involve fundamental questions about the extent of State authority, about the course of economic development, and about societal cohesion. Moreover, in most instances, success is based both on the will of the parties to surrender their weapons and on the unstinting support of the international community — a difficult combination to find.

The United Nations has been mandated to undertake disarmament in peacekeeping operations in Africa, South-East Asia, Central America, and the Balkans. Each is a different experience, reflecting a particular country's

circumstances, the terms of the peace agreement and the mandate approved by the Security Council. But some general definitions apply.

Strictly speaking, disarmament is the assembly and cantonment of combatants and the voluntary handing over of their weapons to peacekeeping troops, who then ensure the safe storage of the weapons and their final disposition. In most cases, the responsibility for the assembly of combatants lies with the party to be disarmed, as provided for in a peace agreement.

Technically, demining is a separate task in its own right. But that, too, is an essential feature of most peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building operations, and is much easier when the active cooperation of the parties to the conflict can be secured.

As a rule, the disarmament of civilians is not the responsibility of a peacekeeping mission, but rather a task incumbent upon national authorities, sometimes with assistance provided by the international community. However, by supporting efforts to strengthen national law-enforcement capacity, a peacekeeping operation can play a key role in creating an environment in which the general populace does not deem weapons to be necessary.

Buy-back programmes have been considered a useful means of accelerating disarmament and advancing the peace process in post-conflict periods and in regions marred by insecurity. When timed properly, they can be very beneficial. However, experience has shown that, if timed wrongly, weapons exchanges which involve direct financial payments to individuals may actually be destabilizing.

For example, civilian buy-back programmes may inhibit military disarmament, in which combatants are instructed by their leaders to hand over their weapons but are not paid to do so. Furthermore, the establishment of a high price for weapons to promote disarmament could create an artificial market for weapons, and spark an overwhelming movement of weapons into the country and surrounding region.

So a cautious approach is highly desirable, even when non-monetary incentives are used. The final decision should take into account the overall context of proliferation and the potential effects at the local, national and regional levels. Weapons-collection programmes may need to be linked with incentives such as provision of jobs or training, which are not easily converted into cash, and related to development initiatives that benefit entire communities.

Experience has also shown that if ex-combatants do not have the means of sustaining themselves as civilians, they can be tempted into carrying arms and committing acts of banditry, thereby destabilizing the peace process. Therefore, disarmament needs to be complemented by comprehensive demobilization and reintegration programmes.

The process of demobilization involves registration, medical examinations, assistance to combatants to meet their immediate basic needs and transportation to their home communities or, sometimes, absorption into a unified military force.

Finally, reintegration denotes a variety of steps to help ex-combatants adapt successfully to a productive civilian life. This assistance has to be given to returning refugees and internally displaced persons as well as to demobilized combatants and their families. It includes employment and micro-credit programmes, vocational training and education.

Clearly, reintegration is a long-term social and economic process which needs to continue even after a peacekeeping operation has completed its mandate.

This will no doubt be a wide-ranging debate. What should not be questioned is that the international community can offer significant support to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. Allow me to suggest that success will be determined to no small extent by how well we bear in mind the following considerations.

First, terms for the disposal of arms and ammunition should be included within peace agreements when they are first negotiated, so that the issue does not become an obstacle to peace at a later stage.

Secondly, predictable financing is critical. Starting a programme without the funding to complete it may raise expectations on the part of ex-combatants that cannot be fulfilled. This, in and of itself, can prove to be highly destabilizing. Voluntary financing of demobilization projects can also be a problem, as any delays in receiving contributions can place the entire process in jeopardy. Member States are encouraged to contribute to the United Nations Development Programme Trust Fund that has been established to deal

with small arms, and which includes a weapons collection and destruction component. International institutions such as the World Bank can also provide valuable technical and financial support, but there must be close coordination between the Bank and the peacekeeping operation involved.

Thirdly, the special needs of child soldiers, including girl soldiers, should, where appropriate, be seen as a crucial element in a peacekeeping operation's mandate. It has been estimated that more than 300,000 children under 18 years of age were used as soldiers in conflicts around the world between 1995 and 1997. Some United Nations peacekeeping operations have included a special focus on the demobilization of child soldiers. United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Children's Fund, and non-governmental organizations, provide special programmes for them, including counselling, education and family reunification.

But much more needs to be done. The problem will not be solved until the international community adopts a concerted approach, which must address the causes as well as the consequences of child recruitment, that is, the social, economic and political factors which make children susceptible to it. The Security Council should in future make the needs of child soldiers a central concern when it considers specific crises, when it mandates peacekeeping or peacemaking missions and when it designs peace-building programmes. It is also worth remembering that demobilizing child soldiers and children who are pressed into the war effort in other roles can be an opportunity as well as a problem. It can be the first thing the parties to a conflict are able to agree on, and so become the starting point for a dialogue which later leads to a ceasefire and a broader agreement.

Fourthly, the deployment of a follow-on political mission after the termination or withdrawal of a peacekeeping operation can be a useful means to avoid setbacks and relapses into insecurity. The inclusion within such missions of expertise in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration might not be an obvious step, but it would certainly prove beneficial.

Finally, a rigorous media and publicity campaign to educate and mobilize popular support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts must be built into the operation from the start.

The process of post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is rooted in and feeds into a broader search for peace. The international community, working through the United Nations, has a real contribution to make. I look forward to hearing the Council's views.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, presiding over our meeting, and to thank the Malaysian delegation for taking the initiative, during its presidency of the Security Council this month, of choosing the very important issue of the disarmament and reintegration into society of ex-combatants.

There is no doubt that this initiative indicates the importance that you attach to this issue, Mr. President, and the importance of the role of the United Nations in addressing it with a view to maintaining international peace and security.

The international community suffers as a result of the persistence of conflicts, which have led to destabilization and insecurity in many parts of the world. The major reason for the continuation of such conflicts is illicit flows of arms, in particular light weapons, and their distribution and storage. This is a matter that threatens national, regional and international security; the lack of stability has an impact on development in those regions.

Some stable parts of the world have begun to achieve significant economic and political progress in the past few years. But in other parts of the world, such progress remains threatened by conflicts. Halting such conflicts and their recurrence remains one of the major concerns of the United Nations.

There is no doubt that States have a sovereign right to self-defence, which requires procurement of defence equipment and *materiél*. However, the interests of humanity require that minimal of resources be allocated to military purposes. It is therefore important that countries work to reduce military expenditure and focus on economic, social and human development.

We have noticed an increase in illegal weapons flows in recent years. Halting that increase will require us to determine the sources of such weapons flows. That is a very important element in any effort to monitor that trade. Weapons exporters are responsible, albeit indirectly, for the exacerbation of conflicts, and particular

importance must be attached to the role of arms merchants in exporting such weapons to conflict areas. In this respect, we should consider the role of the sanctions committees of the Security Council in studying these issues so that we can deal with the problem effectively. The Security Council should confront this issue as a matter of urgency, including by examining the role that the United Nations could play in collecting and disseminating relevant information. We also welcome the contribution of the Secretary-General with regard to concentrating on the problem of the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, especially in Africa.

Peacekeeping missions have played a very important role in the attempt to stop conflicts from being renewed, and they have a very important role in building post-conflict peace and security. This is a new and logical task that has been given to them. The maintenance and consolidation of peace after the end of a conflict requires enormous effort. It has therefore become very important for the international community to support such efforts for the purpose of strengthening economic, social and security structures in these regions. Therefore, we support the role of the United Nations in bringing about and consolidating peace in post-conflict situations. In this context, we must coordinate the response to international conflicts with the wishes of the party concerned, because without the political will of that party it is impossible to achieve progress in the peace process. The existence of a real commitment on the part of the parties to the conflict is one of the preconditions for the success of the peace process. In this context, we support the intention of the United Nations to establish peacekeeping forces in Haiti and in Guinea-Bissau. We hope that this experiment will be expanded should it prove successful.

The experience of the United Nations and other international organizations over the last few years confirms the content of "An Agenda for Peace", which was issued by the Secretary-General in 1992. In that document the Secretary-General observed that the multiplicity of tasks required genuine cooperation among international agencies and organizations, and at the regional level. It also requires the active participation of United Nations Member States.

We now turn to major specific issues of today's debate: the disarmament of ex-combatants and their reintegration into society. This involves two separate but complementary processes: first, the disarmament of ex-combatants, and secondly, their reintegration into society. It is important to explain the advantages of disarming ex-combatants before becoming engaged in their reintegration. If they are not first disarmed, the conflict will inevitably resume as before. This problem has been observed in many hot spots where crucial institutions and structures were not given the necessary support to resume their natural tasks in the country of conflict, without which, conflict inevitably returns.

The media have provided many examples of naked, barefoot children and young people carrying modern, sophisticated weapons. In such cases how can we end conflicts? It is no surprise that in such situations conflicts have continued for more than 20 years. And there is nothing on the horizon that suggests that these conflicts will end any time soon.

The disarmament of combatants is a very important matter, and despite the fact that today's debate deals with ex-combatants, we need to be aware that in fact they will not become ex-combatants unless we insist on their disarming and on disarmament in general. Otherwise, conflicts will continue interminably, and ongoing conflict will become a fait accompli, as has happened in some countries, which after many years have become known as conflict zones.

If we are able to disarm combatants and make them into ex-combatants, we can deal with the second part of the problem: the reintegration of these people into society. We believe that the reintegration of ex-combatants is more difficult than disarmament. It is true that disarmament is dangerous, in that combatants may refuse to surrender their weapons. Anyone who undertakes this disarmament work is endangered by those who do not wish to surrender their weapons.

The reintegration process involves a number of factors, the most important of which is the willingness of the combatants to surrender their weapons, having grown used to conflict and to the many forms of aggression, pillaging and violence that accompany fighting.

If achieving disarmament assumes that all difficulties can be overcome, the reintegration process assumes an economic situation that facilitates this process, to include the creation of appropriate jobs and the necessary social and economic services. Let us be practical and ask ourselves how many of the developing countries that are in a state of peace have the capacity to provide for the economic and social needs of their citizens. What then can be expected from the economic and social situations of countries in conflict? It is not news that refugee camps, full of victims of conflict, have become centres for the distribution of weapons, or that refugees,

voluntarily or otherwise, are participating in conflicts. Although the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants precede the reintegration process, the latter is more complex, owing to the enormous requirements and the difficulty of fulfilling them.

Only rarely, has the United Nations, for all its efforts, succeeded in these tasks of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration although it has succeeded in a number of cases. We must be aware that this does not lie within the capacity of the Organization. Despite the Charter's responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Organization is unable to deal with the massive power of the arms trade to exacerbate existing conflicts and incite new ones. This is particularly true in the current climate of globalization, which has its good and evil aspects, and given the ease of communications it has provided.

Today's open debate in the Security Council is part of an international effort to contribute to the study of this issue. We hope that the views and opinions presented here will lead to the active resolution of these problems. In conclusion, I would like to stress my delegation's support for the presidential statement proposed by the Malaysian delegation for issuance at the end of this debate.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom warmly welcomes Malaysia's initiative to hold an open debate on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in peacekeeping environments. Effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is crucial in building lasting peace and security in post-conflict societies.

We are also grateful to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for their non-paper, which provides a sound basis for today's discussion. We welcome the Department's plans for a manual setting out principles and guidelines for practical disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in a peacekeeping environment, and look forward to its publication.

Today's debate will only be of value if it has a practical effect on the way in which the Council addresses conflict situations in the future. The recommendations provided by the Secretary-General in his reports to the Security Council are clearly crucial in this respect. The Secretariat is right to flag disarmament, demobilization and reintegration requirements in peacekeeping operations. This must continue, in particular when making recommendations on a new or developing operation.

For their part, the Security Council and the General Assembly must ensure that a United Nations peacekeeping operation has an appropriate mandate and sufficient budgetary and human resources for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration tasks assigned to it. If an operation is to carry out disarmament or provide security at disarmament sites, its mandate must provide the appropriate authorization and the right force level, based on clear and practical advice from the Secretary-General. Half-measures do little to contribute to lasting peace. The possible peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone will provide an early opportunity for the Council to translate today's debate into concrete action. How valuable it would be if we could, with that kind of experience in the field, thrash out a blueprint for action on future occasions, which would give us confidence that these things can work.

In that spirit, I would like to touch on some elements that seem to the United Kingdom to be important in constructing an effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and many of these elements reflect the priorities spelled out to us just now by the Deputy Secretary-General.

First, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration must be given a higher priority in peace agreements and be subject to careful planning. Where possible, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan should be written into a peace agreement with its provisions set out clearly. It is important that all parties understand what is on offer, including through public information campaigns.

Secondly, effective international coordination is essential. The United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors all have a role to play, but their efforts must be concerted. As a rule, the United Nations should provide the coordinating framework.

Thirdly, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes must be well resourced to be effective and tailored to the specific circumstances of different societies, including existing norms of weapons possession.

Fourthly, we must address the specific problem of child soldiers. Child soldiers are often the last to disarm and the first to rearm. Often as much victim as perpetrator, the child soldier requires special attention

and treatment. The emphasis must be on long-term reintegration.

Fifthly, the security of collected weapons is important if they are to be placed under the control of legitimate military authorities. Otherwise, they must be destroyed as soon as possible. Those who surrender weapons must also be given a strong and credible guarantee of their security.

The need for security is also tied into the need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to be set in the context of wider security sector reform, including the restructuring of armed forces and assistance to the civilian police force and judiciary. Unless the State itself can provide security to its citizens, there will be no incentive for disarmament. This is why the United Kingdom has focused a significant proportion of its aid to Sierra Leone on contributing to the radical restructuring and training of the Sierra Leone armed forces.

The third and equally important element of today's debate is reintegration. The United Nations has a lot of experience, both good and bad. In Mozambique, for instance, a long-term reintegration programme worked. My delegation looks forward to hearing from the representative of Mozambique in this debate about his country's experience in this regard. In Angola, the programme did not work. The fact that it did not work contributed to a much longer and costlier conflict in that country. In effect, reintegration meant returning to UNITA's ranks. We have to find a way to ensure that former soldiers have a stake in building the peace and that their future is assured.

My sixth point is that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration cannot be effective if new weapons are flowing into the target area. We must therefore ensure that arms exporting countries exercise responsibility in their small-arms transfers and we must combat the illicit trafficking of such weapons.

But disarmament need not always take place in the context of a peace agreement and the deployment of a peacekeeping operation. The initiatives taken up, for instance, by the Governments of Albania and Mali, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union, provide commendable examples of attempts to deal with surplus weapons in civilian possession. This "security first" approach should be applauded. For example, the demobilization of child soldiers in long-running civil wars may be possible even before a peace agreement is concluded.

The United Kingdom is particularly pleased that you, Sir, are chairing our meeting on this subject today. Your presence is a clear signal of the importance which Malaysia attaches to this subject. We look forward to working closely with you, with your delegation and with other Council members on this issue in the future and we are glad to support the draft declaration which Malaysia has proposed to conclude this debate.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kinds words about Malaysia.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for us to see you, the Foreign Minister of Malaysia, as President of the Security Council as we take up this important item on the initiative of your country.

Today's discussion in the Security Council confirms the relevance of the question of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as an essential, integral part of peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peace-building. The Russian Federation shares the view that, in many cases, the disarmament of ex-combatants and the collection and the destruction of their weapons are important conditions for normalizing regional crisis situations. We agree that the issue before us today requires a comprehensive approach and the coordination of efforts by the international community. Otherwise, it will not be possible to establish firm guarantees that conflicts will not be resumed.

The Security Council is always aware of the issue of demobilization of regions in crisis, including, when appropriate within peacekeeping operation mandates, provisions on assistance in the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants. At the same time, however, such good decisions are frequently confined to the paper on which they are written and never actually implemented. One does not have to look far for examples. Suffice it to recall some issues regularly considered by the Security Council. One particularly obvious example of the grave consequences of failed efforts to disarm combatants is the collapse of the peace process in Angola. As is well known, and as was just pointed out by Ambassador Greenstock, the main reason for the situation is the failure of the Angolan opposition UNITA to implement its commitments under the peace agreements, primarily as they relate to the demobilization of all its forces. The Security Council could usefully draw the appropriate lesson from the Angola situation by stepping up its search for ways

effectively to ensure the full implementation of its resolutions.

The issues before us today arise acutely and directly within the context of a settlement of the Kosovo situation. Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) clearly provides for the demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other armed groups of Kosovar Albanians. This task was given by the Security Council to the international force for Kosovo, KFOR. It calls for the genuine disarmament of the KLA fighters and the full dismantling of all the military structures of that organization, which may not be re-established in any form whatsoever. As a first step, it also calls for the halt to all acts of violence by the KLA. Unless this task is performed as quickly and effectively as possible, it will be impossible to stabilize the situation in and around Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or to ensure a strong and lasting settlement of the Kosovo crisis.

Unfortunately, the process of demobilizing the KLA is not progressing fast enough, and KFOR contingents from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization member countries are clearly not moving ahead on this very important issue. As an active participant in the Kosovo settlement and in KFOR, Russia expects a qualitative breakthrough in the demobilizing of the KLA to be achieved very soon. We will be continuing to take the necessary steps in this area, *inter alia*, in the framework of the Security Council.

One further example is Tajikistan. Against the background of the peace process unfolding in that country, particularly egregious is the delayed implementation of the Protocol on military issues of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, which provides for disarming and dismantling the military units of the opposition. The main responsibility for this, of course, lies with the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). However, the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan could have played a more active role. It is clearly mandated to monitor the cantonment of UTO fighters, the collection of weapons, demobilization and reintegration and to provide assistance to the parties in this area. Moreover, the demobilization and reintegration into civilian life of the opposition fighters and the inter-Tajik peace process as a whole require adequate financial and material support from the international community, which, unfortunately, has been quite inadequate to date. We trust that the appeal made in Security Council resolution 1240 (1999) for contributions, including the implementation of proposals for demobilization, and the relevant appeals of the Secretary-General eventually will be heeded by the international community. Otherwise, the peace process in Tajikistan may give rise to serious difficulties.

The task of disarming and demobilizing participants in armed conflict is indissolubly linked to the problem of the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in regions of crisis. My colleagues this morning have also referred to this issue. Russia is interested in stepping up efforts to combat the illicit use of conventional weapons, particularly in conflict areas. We support United Nations involvement in efforts to collect and destroy small arms and light weapons when its assistance has been requested and the States involved have given their consent.

We must also work to enhance the effectiveness of arms embargo regimes imposed by the Security Council. As we have often stressed, arms embargoes with loopholes merely exacerbate military confrontation between conflicting parties and undermine the authority of the Security Council and of the United Nations as a whole. In this sense, it is necessary to draw serious lessons from the negative experience of the Kosovo crisis, where external support for the KLA was provided virtually in the open, in flagrant violation of the decisions of the Security Council.

In conclusion, I wish to confirm once again that the Russian Federation, fully aware of its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council, will continue to make an active and practical contribution to United Nations peacekeeping in all its aspects, including the issues before us today. I do not believe that there are any differences of opinion about how to resolve this problem. The statement prepared by Malaysia enjoys broad consensus support in the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole. It is therefore our view that the task now is not so much how to systemize principles and approaches, but to implement these principles in practice without allowing violations of Security Council resolutions or having to cite such examples as I cited earlier.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): I wish to begin by expressing the gratitude of my delegation to you, Sir, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council today and to the delegation of Malaysia for the initiative to consider issues of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in an open debate of the Security Council.

The topic of our discussion today relates to some of the most sensitive and difficult aspects of the work of the Security Council and of the United Nations system as a whole. The present period of history is characterized by a large diversity of military conflicts, many of which take place within States, albeit with varying degrees of involvement by other States. Ending such military conflicts represents a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security today. The demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of combatants belonging to a variety of armed formations and groups are among the essential conditions for the transition from a state of war to a situation of peace. It is timely for the Security Council to take up these issues and to address them in a comprehensive and thematic manner. Furthermore, it is useful to hear the views of all interested Member States and from the Deputy Secretary- General, whose presence today we particularly appreciate. Given the fact that the conceptual discussion in which we are engaged today is new in some respects, it would be useful to envisage the areas in which further work, including further study, is necessary.

Experience has shown that progress towards disarmament and demobilization has been quicker and more far-reaching in situations where a comprehensive peace agreement has been concluded. On the other hand, experience has also shown that peace agreements sometimes leave much to be desired. Consequently, the implementation becomes more complex and difficult. Making peace usually implies difficult choices, a fact of which the United Nations is intensely aware today, at the conclusion of the peace agreement in Sierra Leone. However, we should keep in mind the wisdom of the great European philosopher Erasmus, who explained in 1508 that "the most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war". This maxim is relevant to many contemporary conflicts and has a specific meaning: peace is a challenge. It can be disadvantageous from the standpoint of the basic values of humanity, but the real struggle for those values is given a chance when the war is ended.

Since comprehensive peace agreements are not always possible, post-conflict activities often begin on the basis of an imperfect peace or of a mere ceasefire agreement. Even in those situations, the activities of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, especially those related to the fate of child soldiers, should be pursued.

In the right conditions, the United Nations has been able to accomplish successfully several large-scale projects of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The success in Mozambique in 1993 and 1994 — at a time that has been described as an otherwise difficult year for the United Nations — is most often cited as a United Nations success. The total number of government and RENAMO soldiers demobilized was over 70,000. The work was done within the reintegration support scheme, which was largely implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The scheme included cash payments, vocational training, the promotion of small-scale economic activities and credit facilities for the demobilized soldiers and was essential for the successful reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. This example demonstrates the importance of the involvement of UNDP and, more generally, the need to establish a link between the process of demobilization and post-conflict development. All the relevant parts of the United Nations system must come into the picture. Mozambique is a classic example of both the success and the inherent importance of disarmament in post-conflict situations.

The disarmament of combatants is also important as an indicator of progress towards political normalization. The continued existence of parallel or competing armed forces or of widespread banditry is a formidable obstacle to political normalization and should be overcome.

A set of tasks closely related to disarmament issues are defined with the words "mine action". Although mine action has a separate identity, it needs to be mentioned today in view of its overall importance for post-conflict normalization. Mine action is more than only demining; it also includes assistance to mine victims and the creation of mine awareness in the public at large.

The implementation of provisions of international instruments regarding demining and the destruction of landmines must be among the highest priorities after a conflict. This is necessary not only to prevent the recurrence of a given conflict, but also to minimize the amount of land restricted by mine infestation and to expedite the return of refugees, internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers to their zones and their livelihoods. Rehabilitation of mine victims is an important condition of normalization after a conflict and, perhaps most important, the way to restore both the productivity and the human dignity of those most severely affected. Mine awareness needs to be created and supported as a part of the effort to mobilize the population for post-conflict activities. Peace cannot be sustained and development cannot thrive in an atmosphere where an

explosion could wound anyone at any time. Successful mine action strengthens both peace and development.

For all these reasons, mine action must be considered as early as possible in the peace settlement process. Short-term priorities should be carefully designed to reinforce the process of long-term mine action. These lessons have been learned and re-learned in many conflicts around the globe, and are important in post-conflict situations today, including that of Kosovo.

Demobilization and disarmament are essential, but they are not ends in themselves. The objective is the restoration of normality and the reintegration of all segments of society. All combatants should be reintegrated, except persons responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Peace with impunity is unstable peace. It may not always be possible to prosecute the perpetrators immediately after a conflict. However, let me recall that in cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity, statutory limitations do not apply, and bringing the perpetrators to justice remains an essential if sometimes long-term task for guaranteeing the durability of peace.

A particular priority in the process of reintegration must be given to children, in particular to child soldiers. Many contemporary armed conflicts take place over a protracted period of time. The consequences are devastating for children. In addition to the immediate effects of violence, such conflicts deprive entire generations of the benefits of security, health care and, above all, education. Entire generations are being victimized and their prospects for normal life destroyed.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict has done much useful work to help us understand the extent and importance of this problem. The Deputy Secretary-General also spoke extensively about this problem today. The Special Representative has done some country-specific preparatory work, including in Sierra Leone. With the advent of peace in that war-torn country, the task of reintegration of child soldiers and other affected children will be among the basic priorities. We hope that in a future debate focused on the problems of children in armed conflict the Council will thoroughly consider the fate of children in Sierra Leone and in other post-conflict situations.

In its discussion today the Security Council must be aware of the general need to curb illicit arms trafficking, including the spread of small arms. The Council must be grateful to the Disarmament Commission for the adoption of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. The regional efforts pursued by the Organization of American States, the European Union and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) merit the Security Council's support. We particularly welcome the efforts in Africa, a region most tragically exposed to arms trafficking. The decision of the OAU to strengthen the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Togo and to intensify work on practical measures of disarmament are among the important developments in this domain.

This Security Council debate and the follow-up activities should give due attention to wider disarmament and arms limitation as a factor for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Let me conclude by saying that we support the draft presidential statement that was prepared for the conclusion of today's discussion, including the follow-up envisaged in that statement.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I convey my thanks to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, for her presence here today and for her important statement.

As affirmed in the Security Council two years ago, it is a tragic fact of our day that in many places where it is impossible to find food, education or health care, it is easy to find machine guns, grenades and anti-personnel mines. If this trend continues, any hope for development, peace and growth will disappear in many countries.

We therefore congratulate you, Mr. Minister, and the other members of your delegation on having provided us with an opportunity to discuss the subject of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as a critical element in building lasting peace.

Conflicts within States have their roots in weak Governments, in a history of social and ethnic strife, economic uncertainty, corruption, a lack of security and abuse of minorities, all combined with poverty and hopelessness. Such conflicts can result from one of these causes or from a combination of several, but they all require one additional element: access to substantial quantities of small arms and light weapons. With that added factor, war has become a way of life for combatants. It does not matter whether they are on the side of the insurgents or of the Government; wars of this kind recognize no ideology. It is even graver that for

many people, especially teenagers, joining militias is the only possible occupation. All of this has an impact at the national and the regional levels, affecting peace and security and thus requiring the attention of the Security Council.

Consideration of this subject requires reexamination of the concept of security and the creative development of new ways to make it a reality. It is worth asking what we are talking about when we refer in the Charter to the need to maintain international peace and security. In the present context, there is no doubt that what we seek to maintain is the security of the human being. It is also worth asking what we are talking about when we refer in the Charter to the need to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression. In our view, this refers to conflict prevention and peace-building.

Human security and peace-building are thus key complementary concepts. Prerequisites for achieving human security are the strengthening of democratic institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and sustainable development.

In turn, the latter requires that States be able to reconstruct their economies by gaining access to capital markets and reasonable outlets for their exports. Peace-building is an effort to improve conditions from within, strengthening society's internal capacity to resolve its conflicts without violence.

In this context, the proliferation of small arms constitutes a threat to human security in general and to those societies that seek to rehabilitate themselves. This does not mean that arms flows must be unconditionally ended, since the right to self-defence is recognized by the Charter. The idea is to help prevent and control armed conflicts. In this context, it is also necessary to support local efforts to rebuild social cohesion and to restore public security and the legitimacy of the State as the provider of security.

It is essential to restore the confidence and well-being of the societies affected. Your initiative, Sir, to achieve disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants is a good step in that direction.

The task does not end there, however. Post-conflict peace-building can benefit from cooperation projects in which one or more countries participate to create conditions conducive to good governance, economic reform and export. To that end, regional organizations can prove useful, complementing the efforts made at the national level.

The experience of Latin America and the Caribbean has been exemplary in all of these areas. In our opinion, this is due to the cultural level of the societies affected by conflict and to the historically acquired conviction that democracy is the best form of government for the region.

We must strengthen the United Nations capacity to prevent conflicts, to respond when conflict does erupt and to provide instruments for post-conflict peace-building. Peacemaking, peacekeeping and the building of sustainable peace are vital and interdependent elements of the same endeavour: the building of a lasting peace that ensures human security in all societies.

This can become even more concrete only in a framework of investment, production and secure markets for the goods that these societies produce. That would contribute not only to their economic and social development, but also to enhancing confidence, a fundamental element of peace.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Caldas de Moura (Brazil): I am pleased to join previous speakers in welcoming you, Sir, and in congratulating your delegation on the initiative of holding this debate. I wish also to thank Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for their contribution to this exercise.

When your delegation, Sir, started the preparations for this meeting, it circulated an *aide-mémoire* that set the ground for our debate. The Council was to address the subject of the culture of violence and intimidation created in the regrettably very frequent cases of internal conflicts that have plagued the post-cold-war period. In a constant and perverse rule, those conflicts thrive in an environment where small arms and light weapons are easily and inconceivably available.

I recall that the Council has addressed some aspects of this issue in the resolutions and presidential statements adopted in relation to the historical report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The Council also examined the question of the

maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building in a two-day open debate held in December 1998, when it reaffirmed its primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security and underlined

> "the need for close cooperation and dialogue between the bodies of the United Nations system, in particular those directly concerned in the field of post-conflict peace-building". [S/PRST/1998/38, p. 2]

In this context, I would like to recall the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament adopted by consensus at the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Those guidelines deal with practical measures relating to the collection, control, disposal and destruction of arms — especially small arms and light weapons — and the demobilization and integration of former combatants. They are quite detailed. They deal with post-conflict situations that result from internal conflict. The Council should avail itself of that important work.

In our view, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration cannot be dealt with separately. They have to be seen under the more embracing light of promoting peace, prosperity and stability. The rehabilitation of ex-combatants and their reintegration into society are essential.

We also understand that this process cannot be carried out successfully without a firm political commitment by the parties involved, for the dimension of such considerations extends well beyond the peace and security levels and thereby touches on a number of crucial social and economic issues. The political will shown by the parties must be supplemented by the support of the international community. We believe that the Economic and Social Council has a significant coordinating role to play in these efforts.

It is important for the international community to come up with a network of experienced arms experts from those Governments that contribute to peacekeeping operations, forming thus a worldwide database on these matters. In this connection, continuous attention must be paid by the international community during the post-conflict period, which may include the presence on the ground of follow-up political missions. Of course, we must accordingly call for the strict implementation of arms embargoes, where applicable, with particular emphasis on stopping the circulation of small and light arms and on avoiding their accumulation and proliferation.

The observance of such steps is fundamental to ensuring the positive outcome of a particular conflict in terms of building and strengthening peace. Where this has been the case, as in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Mozambique, for example, peace has been established and ex-combatants have been reintegrated into society. Where this has not been the case, as in Angola, tension and conflict linger on and the issues of disarmament, demobilization and the re-integration of ex-combatants fall behind the very pressing task of promoting peace.

To summarize, I wish to express the support of my delegation for the Council's request that the Secretary-General present, within a period of six months, his observations and recommendations to the Council, especially those concerning experiences and lessons learned that may enrich the Council's future review of these issues.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, your presence today demonstrates the commitment of your country, Malaysia, to the maintenance of world peace. We thank your delegation for having included this item on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants on the Security Council's agenda.

The upheavals in the world over the last decade have shown us a new kind of conflict, most often pitting communities in a single State against one another. The nature and the complexity of these conflicts, which we have seen in several parts of the world since the end of the cold war, should not make the Council shirk its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. To be sure, the Security Council was originally established to deal primarily with conflicts between States, but in this new era of history, the Council has to find the right solutions for these new situations.

It is the view of my delegation that it would be best to identify very early the causes of conflict before there is an actual armed clash. That being said, our discussion today does not include conflict prevention because we are dealing specifically with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

We have to recognize that in the area of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants, the United Nations has acquired considerable praiseworthy experience which should be extended. I have in mind, *inter alia*, successful operations in El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Liberia and the Central African Republic. The success of those missions was due in part to cooperation by the parties.

In the case of Angola, the cooperation of one party, UNITA, was greatly lacking in respect of the work of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA).

Our experience should help us to prepare, and to implement with the greatest hope of success, future peacekeeping operations in, for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Although every conflict has its own particular features, it would be wise once a ceasefire agreement is reached for the United Nations mission which is to monitor implementation of the agreement to have written into its mandate a directive to collect and destroy weapons seized, to monitor the transfer of illicit arms and to help in demining. In this context, the international community should not be miserly in the resources required in order to consolidate peace.

However important in themselves, these tasks are not sufficient to ensure a lasting peace. They should be supported by multi-sectoral action to strengthen peace. This assumes that the Security Council would make an appeal to the United Nations specialized agencies dealing with development, human rights, education and health. It also assumes that international financial institutions and bilateral donors would demonstrate greater flexibility in the granting of loans to countries emerging from conflicts, where the entire administrative, economic and social infrastructures have very often been destroyed.

While a cure is no substitute for prevention, my delegation can never overemphasize that the Security Council, in cooperation with regional and subregional bodies, should engage in conflict prevention. That would save innumerable lives and would help ensure the optimal use of resources and funds for the development which countries in conflict desperately need.

The President: I thank the representative of Gabon for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*spoke in French*): The Council is naturally honoured that this meeting is being held under the presidency of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, and that it concerns a subject of great importance to my country.

In the decade that is now drawing to a close, no region in the world has been spared the heightening of internal conflict. These confrontations have often involved not only regular forces, but also armed groups, insurgents, militia — unbridled elements that vie with each other for control of parcels of land. Proliferation and spread of these armed groups, combined with the spread of light weapons, makes it even more difficult and complicated to conclude peace agreements and, where they do exist, to verify compliance.

Nothing can replace agreement by the parties concerned to apply peace arrangements in good faith. Here,the role of the Security Council is decisive even though peacekeeping and peace-building are the result of the efforts of all actors: international institutions, regional organizations, donor States and other funding bodies.

The disarmament of ex-combatants is, as Malaysia has rightly affirmed, a problem that deserves attention, and for which we must find a lasting solution. The recent case of Guinea-Bissau shows that the recovery and stocking of weapons, even under surveillance, does not adequately prevent fresh outbreaks of tension or the resumption of hostilities. Only the destruction of these weapons can really prevent their being used again; such provisions should be part of peace agreements sponsored by regional organizations and the United Nations. It is therefore necessary to include this objective of demobilization and demilitarization in a comprehensive approach. Collection of weapons must go hand in hand with demobilization and the reintegration into civil life of those who bear arms. Without the possibility of social rehabilitation, and reintegration into national life, ex-combatants will be inclined to take up their weapons again at the first hitch in a peace agreement or because they will simply see this as the best, or only way of improving their living conditions.

It has therefore clearly become essential for agreements putting an end to conflicts — in particular internal conflicts — to include precise provisions for implementation and verification in the context of disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants.

But the international community must not evade its own political and financial responsibilities to make possible the implementation of these agreements and thereby ensure the success of peaceful transition. This effort on the part of the international community can take many forms. First, in the case of the deployment of authorized multinational forces or United Nations peacekeeping operations, the task of collecting, storing and, as I said earlier, destroying such weapons, could be included in the mandate of those forces and operations. Secondly, help could be provided for restructuring the armed forces in order to avoid the maintenance or re-establishment of militias, and, in some cases, for reintegrating some of the ex-combatants into established, controlled military structures. Lastly, and most important, economic assistance could be provided for rehabilitation and development so as to deter ex-combatants from ever using armed force again.

In all of these areas, more generous support from the international community would be necessary. The lack of financial resources is, in fact, the main obstacle to the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. In this respect, we can only express regret that too often such activities depend on voluntary contributions which, by their very nature, are uncertain. In a number of cases, programmes were carefully developed by the United Nations, but in the end it was not possible to implement them because of a lack of funding.

The record of the efforts made over the past few years is thus extremely uneven. The saddest example is the resumption of fighting in Angola, which is a cruel illustration of the failure of a disarmament and demobilization operation envisioned in a peace agreement and conducted by and entrusted to the United Nations.

Fortunately, there are, on the other hand, some positive exceptions. In Mali, Mozambique, Cambodia, the Central African Republic and Guatemala, the tasks of disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life have been undertaken and successfully completed, in the first place, because of the involvement of the parties, but also because of the persistence and constancy of international assistance. The United Nations Operation in Mozambique, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) have played an essential role in applying the principles that we are discussing today. The two operations in the Central African Republic — one of which, MISAB, was a multinational operation entrusted exclusively to Africans, the other, MINURCA, being a United Nations mission — succeeded in recovering and keeping under control over 90 per cent of the heavy weapons and 60 per cent of the light weapons that had been circulating during three uprisings that broke out in 1996. A demobilization programme was developed with the assistance of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and we should pay particular tribute to the work of UNDP in this field. UNDP has played a fundamental role in the demilitarization of the Central African Republic, an operation which is preserving respect for civilian life.

We must bear these examples in mind in dealing with the problems arising today in several post-conflict situations, situations that completely justify the statement made by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Fréchette, to whom we express our gratitude.

In Guinea-Bissau, it is now truly essential for the weapons-collection operation initiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to resume fully and to succeed and for the combatants to be demobilized, thereby contributing to the stabilization of the country as it prepares for elections.

We are pleased that an agreement has just been signed by the parties in Sierra Leone, and we understand very well how essential this is to our British friends. That agreement includes a section devoted to disarmament, cantonment, demobilization and the reintegration of combatants. The United Nations, which is involved through the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), working together with the parties in Sierra Leone and with ECOMOG — the competent regional organization — must see to it that this task is successfully completed if we truly want that country, which has been at war for eight years, to rediscover peace, with its attendant benefits, in particular the return of refugees. And we know that almost 400,000 refugees are in the neighbouring country of Guinea.

The same can be said about the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Again, the news is good, although the situation is fragile. The success and the solidity of the ceasefire agreement that has just been signed by the warring parties will require the recovery of weapons and the demobilization of combatants from the many armed groups, militias and rebels that have been present in the Great Lakes region for a number of years.

The task is considerable. That is another reason why this debate, convened by Malaysia, is so timely and important.

We must also talk about Kosovo, where, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), it is the duty of the international security presence to demilitarize the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the other Albanian armed groups, as well as to establish a safe environment for the civilian population. That is necessary if we want peace to be restored and the provisions of the important resolution adopted here to be fully implemented.

Those are the reasons why we are grateful for your country's initiative, Mr. President, which deals with concrete problems that relate to several conflicts being dealt with by the Security Council. The presidential statement that will be adopted at the end of this debate will confirm the importance the Council attaches to this question, and, above all, its determination, stimulated by the statements made today, to find answers. It will then be up to the Council to embody in each case the principles and recommendations that it will endorse in that statement.

The President: I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): It is an honour, Sir, to have you preside over our meeting today, and I thank you for doing so. I also wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her opening statement.

The past few years of United Nations peacekeeping have repeatedly reminded us of the brutal and complex nature of today's conflicts. Internal struggles are often coupled with a profusion of legal and illegal arms, thus fuelling ever-greater levels of violence. In the event that a peace agreement is reached between warring factions, the Security Council can and must take active steps to help stem further violence.

For this reason, we applaud the efforts of Malaysia, as President of the Council, to highlight the important role that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants play in the prevention of further violence and the reconstruction of civil society.

The political will of the parties in conflict to abide by a peace agreement and disarm cannot be overemphasized. Without such will, there is little the United Nations can effectively do. Angola is but one glaring and unfortunate example of a potential success that has turned into failure. Despite the United Nations having successfully disarmed and demobilized more than 50,000 ex-combatants of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), their hard fought gains were quickly lost due to a lack of commitment by UNITA to abide by the peace accords.

In Sierra Leone, the United States is encouraged by the peace agreement that was signed yesterday in Lomé. Securing lasting peace in that war-torn country, however, will not be easy. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations anticipates, I believe, that more than 33,000 combatants will have to be disarmed and reintegrated into Sierra Leonean society before peace can be assured. This is a formidable task.

In order to succeed in our future endeavours, we must learn from past experiences and seek innovative ways to make disarmament and demobilization more effective. To this end, we are encouraged by the excellent work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Lessons Learned Unit which is planning to finalize a report on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration later this year.

Similarly, the United States is encouraged by the work of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which held a workshop in Guatemala City in November 1998 on weapons collection and the integration of former combatants into civil society — the experiences of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Colombia. All of these efforts, along with the recent United Nations Disarmament Commission's working paper on practical disarmament, will significantly add to the international community's understanding of this important topic.

One creative and innovative idea in the area of disarmament of small arms and light weapons came from a trip last year by Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala — who I am happy to see with us today — when he visited Albania, where the Secretariat helped develop an idea to empower local Albanian leaders to collect and exchange arms for local community civil construction projects. In the past, cash-for-arms programmes have done little to help improve local economies or keep arms from ex-combatants. This new approach of trading local infrastructure for arms may offer an alternative to previous efforts in the field of disarmament.

Despite the success of these new initiatives, it is not sufficient merely to collect arms. The international community must also take steps to control the flow of

legal and illicit arms to areas of conflict. All of our nations which sell small arms and light weapons, or which are involved in the traffic flow of these weapons, bear responsibility for turning a blind eye to the destruction they cause. We should act together now to curb arms transfers to zones of conflict.

To this end I would like to highlight some of the ideas Secretary of State Madeleine Albright advanced during the United Nations ministerial meeting on Africa last year, as well as arms-control initiatives the United States has undertaken at the international and national levels. Secretary Albright has proposed pursuit of a global convention based on the path-breaking Organization of American States convention against illicit trafficking. We should conclude negotiations on the global convention as soon as possible. The United States also supports the United Nations Crime Commission's work on illicit arms trafficking, as well as the European Union's Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers. We will seek to ensure better coordination with the European Union in our respective arms-transfers policies. On the national level the United States has enacted legislation tightening gun-brokering by companies involved in international arms transfers.

My delegation would like to draw a distinction between disarmament and demobilization, which we generally view to be under the purview of the Security Council, and reintegration, which we generally view to be a post-conflict peace-building, or development, activity. The reintegration of former combatants into their societies falls into a grey area between the two areas of international assistance: relief and development. In order for combatants to be successfully reintegrated, they must be able to find work in other areas of their country's economy. To this end, the United States is pleased to see that the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva, which will begin in a few days, will be taking up the subject of international cooperation and coordination in the response to humanitarian emergencies, particularly the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

The fact that two major organs of the United Nations — the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — are looking into this matter is an indication of the importance that demobilization and reintegration of soldiers has on civil society in countries racked by internal conflict. It is also a reflection and recognition of the complexity of the challenge faced in such an effort, whether in Central America, in Africa or in Kosovo.

Finally, the existence of child soldiers is an unfortunate reality in many of today's conflicts. Such children are subjected to horrors that often have a brutalizing effect on young, fragile psyches. Not only must children be given productive activities to prevent them from turning to violence, but they must be taught that there is another way of life besides that of guns, destruction and mayhem.

In my previous assignment I was able, in Sri Lanka, to observe at first hand the complex challenge and difficulty involved in stopping the use of child soldiers once such a practice has begun. In that context especially, the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts should be supported and commended.

We look forward to the statements of non-members of the Council, especially those who have had experience in taking practical and effective steps to implement and to sustain, in the context of their own societies and their own histories, the theoretical concepts we are discussing today. And again, I would like to thank you, Sir, and your delegation for holding an open debate on this most important topic. And thank you again for your presence here today.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): My delegation extends to you, Sir, a very warm welcome to New York and thanks you for organizing this open debate on such an important issue. We are honoured to see you presiding over this meeting of the Security Council, Mr. Minister.

In the discharge of its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council is nowadays faced with very complex conflict situations. These conflicts are mostly within the borders of one State, but have international implications. Some of them involve large numbers of factions, militias and armed groups over which Governments often have little or no control. The massive flow of small arms also adds to the complexity of the conflicts, which in turn require a great deal of investment in terms of resources in the search for a lasting solution. Besides, these efforts can be extremely time-consuming. Therefore, in the search for a durable peace in any conflict situation, one fundamental objective is to avoid a recurrence of the conflict. This is why the issues of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants are so crucial.

There are instances where fighting continues notwithstanding the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping or peace-building mission on the ground. In order to avoid such situations, it is important that the warring parties are disarmed at the outset. This, however, depends to a large measure, on the one hand, on the political will of the parties to end the conflict, and on their commitment to surrender their weapons, on the other hand.

There are instances where combatants tend to hold on to their weapons as trophies symbolizing their participation in what they may view as a noble cause. In other instances, because of security concerns or other hidden motives, the incentives for surrendering weapons are very small. Acts of banditry are common examples.

The international community must, however, find ways to ensure that in peacekeeping or peace-building operations, combatants are effectively disarmed to avoid a recurrence of the conflict. This objective could be achieved by first, incorporating clear terms for disarmament in peace agreements and giving a clear and comprehensive mandate to the peacekeeping or peace-building operation; and second, by devising an appropriate and workable scheme of incentives to induce voluntary handover of weapons. A scheme of incentives would, however, require the financial support of the international community.

Demobilization of ex-combatants is also an important aspect in the quest for a lasting settlement of a conflict. As clearly indicated by the Deputy Secretary-General in her statement this morning, this process includes the registration, medical examination of combatants, and the provision of their immediate basic needs, such as transportation to their communities, or even their absorption into a unified force. In this connection, the situation in Sierra Leone could very well constitute a real test case, as flagged by the United Kingdom delegation, especially as regards child soldiers.

We agree that demobilization is a necessary complement of disarmament. It is the next stage in the sequence of events. It is, however, often regarded as the responsibility of humanitarian and development agencies. As such, funds are not usually available for this purpose under a peacekeeping mandate. Our delegation is of the view that, while there is merit in the sharing of responsibilities, adequate funding arrangements should be made to avoid citing the lack of funds as the reason for the premature termination of such an important process with all its attendant negative consequences.

The next stage in the sequence is reintegration, which also suffers the same fate. With the exception of the perpetrators of war crimes, who should be pursued and brought to justice, it is an open secret that the integration of ex-combatants into society is not only desirable but also necessary. Failure to do so properly often leads to a rise in banditry and other violent crimes. In countries where there are serious economic hardships, programmes to assist ex-combatants to adapt successfully into productive civilian life is fundamental. Without such programmes, a fragile peace could be easily derailed.

We recognize that a reintegration programme for ex-combatants is a long-term socio-economic goal. Peacekeeping plans should take this fact into consideration and make provision for the continuation of the process even after the conclusion of a peacekeeping operation.

In this connection, it is equally important to bear in mind the special needs of vulnerable groups in society such as women, the elderly and, in particular, children. They should be given special attention. We therefore reiterate our support for the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and encourage him to continue to advocate for the special needs of former child soldiers.

Before I conclude, I would like to touch on the related issue of the massive flow of small arms in many conflict situations, particularly in Africa. It is estimated that over 500,000 small arms are in circulation in the continent. The availability of such arms fuels existing conflicts and sparks new ones. The adoption of a moratorium on the import and export of such arms to regions in conflict is becoming a compelling necessity. Other mechanisms to deal with this situation should also be explored.

Like other delegations, we feel that the Security Council should continue its engagement in the discussion of the important issues of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment. We therefore support the idea of the Secretary-General submitting a report to the Council on his observations and recommendations on principles and guidelines on the subject and lessons learned to facilitate further the consideration of this matter.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. van Walsum (Netherlands): It is a great pleasure to see you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Malaysia, in the Chair during this important meeting.

The Netherlands joins other delegations in welcoming Malaysia's timely initiative to devote an open Council debate to the subject of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Like others, we have repeatedly advocated a fully integrated approach to the familiar string of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building, but any delegation that tries to put this into practice by suggesting that the Council focus its attention on an element of that sequence which comes after the conclusion of a peace agreement will invariably meet the objection that the matter is already being discussed in other United Nations bodies.

We commend the Malaysian delegation for not having allowed itself to be deterred by this objection. Excessive fear of duplication stands in the way of the development of an integrated approach. It is right for the Security Council to discuss disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes because the success or failure of the reintegration of ex-combatants may be largely determined by decisions the Council will have to take in the earlier phases, that is, while it is still occupied with its core task of trying to bring an armed conflict to an end.

Over the past 10 years, a number of large-scale disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes have been set up and implemented, increasingly with the active involvement of the international community. The Netherlands has contributed to some of these programmes, such as those in Guatemala, Rwanda, Angola, Mali and Albania. Not all of these were success stories, but important lessons can be learned from all of them. In this connection, we welcome the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration principles and guidelines, which the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Lessons Learned Unit has recently released.

One of these lessons seems an obvious one, namely that without the political will of the parties concerned, it is difficult, if not impossible, to implement a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It is true that political will cannot be enforced, but in the context of a truly integrated approach more could perhaps be done to stimulate it. From the very beginning of international involvement, parties could be made aware of their collective vital interest in a functioning disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. They could indeed be made to realize that a credible disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme serves as an indication that parties take their commitment to peace seriously, and that the international community's willingness to contribute to the larger post-conflict peace-building process will largely depend on that perception.

It is essential that the Security Council pronounce itself on the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in any peace agreement. The fact that the subject is discussed in other bodies does not detract from that. It is the Security Council that can monitor and influence the drafting of a peace agreement from its initial stage and make sure that all elements conducive to a durable settlement are adequately incorporated in the document. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, we believe, are among these elements. A conflict cannot simply be switched off, and a country where the fighting has ended must never be left to its own devices.

There is no issue where this is more evident than that of child soldiers. The problem of demobilization and reintegration, already quite intractable in general, becomes critically compounded where child soldiers are concerned. It is obvious that ex-combatant children will require a high degree of supervision for a considerable length of time. A country that demobilizes its child soldiers but then fails to accompany them until they have been fully integrated into civilian society, is placing a ticking time bomb at its own foundations.

Child soldiers may need to be re-educated, they may require treatment, but they cannot be held accountable the way their adult fellow ex-combatants are. This will often be difficult enough, for some of the worst atrocities have been committed by child soldiers. As to the accountability of adults, however, there should be no doubt. The Netherlands delegation has consistently maintained that accountability and reconciliation are not incompatible. On the contrary, we believe that lasting peace is not attainable without accountability. This principle should always be fully reflected in every programme of reintegration of ex-combatants.

The representative of Finland will later in the debate make a substantive contribution to our deliberations on behalf of the European Union. It goes without saying that the Netherlands fully associates itself with her statement.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his kind words to me.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her most illuminating statement on the subject of our discussion this morning. May I request the Deputy Secretary-General to convey Malaysia's thanks to the Secretary-General for his own support and personal commitment to our effort in the Council to provide greater focus on this subject. I should also like to thank members of the Council for their support for this initiative taken by Malaysia. We are especially grateful for their encouragement and cooperation in crystallizing ideas relevant to the Council's discussion. We are also very appreciative of the cooperation given to us by the Secretariat and by Member States on this initiative.

Over the last few years the Security Council has discussed questions specifically related to preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building and has issued presidential statements on them. Malaysia welcomes the Council's willingness to continue with this discussion. We believe that it is important for the Council to visit and revisit these questions on a regular basis, while addressing itself to the immediate and pressing problems arising from various conflict situations occurring around the world.

Malaysia strongly believes that in exercising its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter, the Council should not be preoccupied mainly with the specific conflict situations on its agenda. The Council must be able, from time to time, to discuss thematic issues or receive orientation briefings on cross-cutting issues which could help the Council in making decisions that will ultimately bring about positive results. We consider the discussion on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment to be an important contribution to this process. It will allow the Council to contribute substantively to the enhancement and effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building activities.

The Council is already fully aware of the issues involved. Increasingly, the United Nations has had to deal with conflicts which are primarily internal in nature but with some degree of international implications. They involve warring parties and factions which engage in bitter, and often protracted, fighting that threatens political institutions, damages the economy and causes severe social problems. Some of the parties resort to practices and activities which clearly violate human rights and international humanitarian law. In many cases, these activities are carried out with a misguided sense of impunity. This inevitably results in a pervasive culture of violence and intimidation.

Thousands of innocent civilians have been internally displaced or forced to become refugees. International workers, including United Nations personnel, have also become unfortunate victims in the ongoing conflicts. The availability of arms to conflicting parties — in particular, as mentioned by previous speakers, small arms and light weapons — has further complicated the situation. The alarming involvement of child soldiers has added another dimension which requires urgent and special attention. In the context of such an environment, the search for peace invariably becomes a long and arduous process. While peace can be quite elusive in these circumstances, sustainable peace becomes harder to achieve following any peace agreement if serious efforts are not made to address in a very comprehensive manner the questions of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

One of the primary objectives of peacekeeping is to create a safe and secure environment that will allow for the resumption of peaceful activities and normal life in society. Peacekeeping should also create conditions that will allow for serious post-conflict peace-building efforts to be carried out. Disarmament is a crucial prerequisite for the consolidation of peace and stability in countries emerging out of conflict. However, experience has shown that disarmament alone cannot guarantee the achievement of the long-term objectives of sustainable peace, stability and development. It has to be followed up with the effective demobilization of ex-combatants and their timely and peaceful reintegration into society. These three elements should be part of a continuous process that stretches from the peacekeeping phase to that of post-conflict peace-building.

Malaysia is fully cognizant of the complexities and sensitivities related to the task of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, especially in the types of conflicts with which the Council is increasingly confronted. This task can succeed only if there exists a will on the part of the parties involved in the conflict to accept and abide by the terms of such an exercise. We have noted that in recent years some measure of success has been achieved in a number of countries where disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes have been implemented. Malaysia

commends those Governments and warring parties which have embarked on these programmes as part of the overall effort to bring about sustainable peace in post-conflict situations. We recognize, as others do, that more needs to be done. In this regard, there has to be substantial support from the international community. We hope that the Security Council can take the lead in further generating such support which, we believe, has to be based on strong political will to assist in resolving conflicts and to help societies emerging out of those conflicts rebuild political, economic and social structures ravaged by war. In this regard, the special needs of child soldiers should be highlighted and given serious attention as a priority matter.

As noted by previous speakers, financing continues to be a problem in the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Protracted conflict naturally puts a severe strain on the resources of a country, especially one which, in the first place, is already in a dire economic situation. Obviously, the question of adequate financing needs to be addressed by all concerned. The international community needs to adopt a coordinated approach, taking into account the specific requirements of the three components of this continuous process. Malaysia believes that the various United Nations organs and bodies can work out arrangements which would satisfy the requirements of specific disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in different post-conflict situations as well as providing for their engagement in accordance with their responsibilities under the Charter. Clearly, we cannot ignore the development aspects of post-conflict peace-building. Reintegration programmes in particular will require some amount of economic assistance.

Malaysia has gained some experience in demobilization and reintegration programmes as a result of an internal insurgency problem that lasted almost 50 years, ending only a decade ago. During those years, the Government had to spend vast sums on defence, mainly for counter-insurgency operations, while at the same time having to focus on development. Over time, soldiers and policemen had to be demobilized and reintegrated into civilian society as the security situation improved. This continuous demobilization and reintegration programme has been incorporated into the country's development plans. Ex-servicemen are given the opportunity to learn skills and to participate in useful economic activity upon retirement from active duty.

We recognize that Malaysia's experience may be unique to the situation which we faced. However, we have learned some very important lessons from it. We have been able to share some of this experience with other countries. For example, Malaysia was able to assist in the training of Namibian ex-combatants to prepare them for reintegration into society following Namibia's independence.

Malaysia believes that efforts to share experiences in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should be encouraged. We look forward to the participation of Member States which have had some direct experience in such programmes in the Council's present discussion on this subject. We welcome the various seminars and conferences on this and other related subjects. We also appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General, Member States and international and regional organizations aimed at developing general principles and guidelines for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment. We also note that United Nations bodies including the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission have done very useful work in this regard.

Malaysia strongly believes that the United Nations should be given a greater role in peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building, including in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment. Given the nature of present-day conflicts, the demands on the United Nations would be enormous. But with the necessary political will, allocation of resources and support from Member States and the international community, we believe the United Nations can succeed.

Malaysia would very much welcome a willingness on the part of the Security Council to address the issue under discussion today on a regular basis. We propose a further discussion of this issue by the Council on the basis of a report which we hope the Secretary-General could submit within six months. We feel that the Council and States Members of the United Nations should be able further to discuss some of the very useful work done by the Secretariat on principles and guidelines, as well as practices, experiences and lessons learned in respect of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. The Council should be able to consider practical measures to guide future United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building efforts to ensure sustainable peace and security in various parts of the world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are still a number of speakers remaining on the list. In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.